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# Community

Social Planning &  
Research Council of  
Hamilton-Wentworth

URBAN MUNICIPAL

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## Reforming Canada's Social Programs:

### How Can We Walk the Social Security Tightrope without a Safety Net?

Caroline Ball

In October, 1994, Canadians were reminded once again that we may soon see our much coveted national social safety net hanging in tatters amidst the stormy winds of federal deficit reduction. Until now, it has remained a cornerstone of our national identity which could never be eroded to a state of disrepair. We thought dismantlement of social security could never happen in our lifetime. And yet, this possibility is now standing at our doorstep.

Since December, the Federal Government, through the work of a Standing Committee on Human Resources Development, has been discussing the pragmatics of streamlining social programs while also being faced with a mandate of fiscal responsibility. At face value it seems logical that making the system more efficient will reduce expenditures by government and decrease the burgeoning load carried by taxpayers.

In tabling the paper, entitled "Improving Social Security in Canada", Human Resources and Development Minister Lloyd Axworthy referred to the need for Canadians to look to new options for more effective delivery of social programs in this country. The options being discussed may involve changes to Unemployment Insurance, employment development services, shifts in established programs funding, and a wholesale change in the look of the Canada Assistance Plan.

Such opportunities signal an interest on the part of the Federal Government to re-construct the social security system and make it more cost effective. Reforms could also bring the system into better alignment with the changing reality of economic conditions. This should not, however, be at the expense of compromising accessibility to social programs.

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

From SPRC's perspective, it is difficult to determine whether the directions suggested in this current set of reform options will have any sort of significant long-term impact on the social security system. There is, at best, scant technical information provided detailing how these reforms will actually affect constructive change. Given the vague descriptions used to characterize these suggestions and the inattention paid to explaining just how these changes will in fact serve to overhaul the system positively, it appears they only represent a slight "tinkering" within the current system.

Considering that the Federal Government has committed itself to a program of federal deficit reduction, it is essential to remain sensitive to the requirement that governments at all levels must find new ways to down-size their debt loads and increase revenue generation. Cost reduction realized through cuts to federally supported social programs will have only minimal and short term impacts on the deficit. How, then, should the government cut the deficit such that future generations of Canadians are not disadvantaged by even higher debt levels?

First, it must be accepted that all government programs should be reviewed. Canadians must set their priorities in determining where fiscal cuts should be made. But, in considering such cuts, each one should be examined to

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A United Way Member Agency



## Hamilton-Wentworth Social Planning and Research Council appoints new director:

**A**s of Dec. 1, 1994 Mr. Don Jaffray is the new Executive Director of the Hamilton-Wentworth Social Planning and Research Council.



"After an extensive national search, the Board of the Social Planning and Research Council (SPRC) has selected Don Jaffray as an Executive Director whose leadership will enable the agency to best meet the daunting challenges of change in our community" said Mary Ann Seldon, President of the Board of Directors.

Jaffray, is a native of Hamilton. He received his B.A. from the University of Guelph in Political Studies and his M.A. (Social Welfare Policy) from McMaster University.

He succeeds former Executive Director Mr. Mike Pennock who stepped down effective November 30, 1994. Pennock served the 30-year-old SPRC for 17 years. Jaffray will be only the sixth Executive Director in the organization's history.

Jaffray said he will "continue the SPRC's work in community economic development, issues of children at risk, promoting self-help and supporting citizen participation in solving local issues."

Don was a social planner and community developer with the SPRC for 15 years. Recently he has developed and

implemented several key projects for the SPRC. The \$1.5 million Community Action Program for Children (CAPC) is one new project funded by Health Canada and designed to address the needs of children at risk in east Hamilton and Stoney Creek.

Don has also helped develop a co-operative enterprise centre to establish new co-operative businesses in the Region. This project demonstrates an innovative method for addressing unemployment issues in the community, a matter of critical interest in solving many social problems.

The Rotary Club of Hamilton Self Help Centre on Barton St. East, is another substantial interest of the SPRC. The Centre is playing a vital role in building citizen involvement in these and other community projects. Jaffray will continue the partnership that the SPRC has built with the Self Help Network and its member organizations.

### **Social Security Reform:**(Continued from page 1)

see how greater efficiency and effectiveness can be achieved. In this way, service levels can be maintained or made better for the same or lower costs. In the process of defining these priorities, a fiscal or cost-reducing agenda must not undermine the social program structures which have been the basis for our higher national standard of living.

If government is truly committed to revamping the system and maximizing social spending, why does it not consider supporting the move to a guaranteed annual income system? Such a model, made accessible to all Canadians, would significantly cut administrative costs and consolidate the current myriad of social security programs into a more streamlined system. Thus, programs like Unemployment Insurance, now paid for through a payroll tax system, would be replaced with one program which could integrate all existing income maintenance and security programs. The dollars required to maintain this guaranteed income program would come from the collection of general tax revenues. Benefit levels should be based on income adequacy guidelines which are tied to the Consumer Price Index.

Of course, social security programs exist to assist people who, for good reason, may not have adequate means to support themselves and their dependents. Most people do not want to be supported by society. They would rather have jobs or run their own businesses. It makes sense, then, that the primary focus of government should be on developing an environment which is conducive to



enterprise and job creation. With more jobs comes greater tax revenues and fewer expenditures necessary in the area of social security.

At any level of system development, effective reform requires a clear vision of where that system should be headed. The Federal Government must continue to play a major role in social policy to ensure continued access and fairness in the system across the country.

One social security reform option, which is currently receiving much attention across the country, would see the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) and the Established Programs Funding (EPF) envelopes replaced with a "block funding" arrangement. Essentially, the Federal Government would give each province a single "lump sum" transfer payment (based on some eligibility formula) to cover expenditures formerly covered through CAP or EPF programmes.

Many critics of this option, including the SPRC, are concerned. Any form of block funding, should only be undertaken with a view to ensuring and enforcing national minimum standards for programmes and services across all the provinces. This remains the key role which must be played by the Federal Government. Progressive models of reform can only be realized when all levels of government subscribe to the same standards of social security for Canadians.

The degree to which this government is willing to stand behind its strategic reform options for social policy will be directly measured in the upcoming federal budget.

For many who have looked constructively and systematically at the policy and programme changes which might be affected through the options outlined, the current federal discussion paper has fallen short in its description of options. In time, we will know better if the social safety net can once again get by with repairs and minor adjustments, or, whether it's more appropriate to replace it with a stronger system complete with a new warranty.

## Landsdale Event

Paul Benvenuti

**H**i I'm Paul Benvenuti and I am the Events Coordinator of the Historical Project, here at the SPRC. Let me say right off the top - I AM GLAD TO BE HERE! I have been employed through a Canada Employment and Immigration grant.

While here, I am organizing a Special Event in the community of Landsdale. At the present time there is much interest in this neighbourhood. With this in mind a community based committee has been established. **A Neighbourhood Group Enhancing Landsdale, or A.N.G.E.L.s** - includes residents of this community, a member of the Business Improvement Area and other interested people. Creative sessions, have and will be facilitated with the end result of getting something "off the ground"! Working together, with this multi-faceted range of people, from the Landsdale neighbourhood will be interesting. We will be looking forward to something that is exciting and a lot of fun, to draw out the residents of Landsdale. In the next newsletter I will update our progress.



## Community Action Program for Children (CAPC)

Susan West

**L**ast year, addressing child poverty was set as a priority for the SPRC by our Board of Directors. In response to this priority, SPRC became instrumental in helping to initiate the Community Action Program for Children (CAPC). CAPC is a three year project, sponsored by Health Canada. Its goal is to provide preventative health programs for children, age 0-6 and their families who live in East Hamilton and Stoney Creek. There are now seven programs operating through the Social Planning and Research Council with the collaboration of St. Joseph's Community Health Centre, STAR, Department of Public Health Services and the Department of Social Services.

CAPC Staff and volunteers have been involved in many events over the past few months that have helped to inform the community about the CAPC programs, which include: Nobody's Perfect, STAR (Skills Through Activities and Recreation), CATCH (Community Access to Child Health), Community Support Worker Program, Parent-Child Program, Parents Helping Parents, and the Student Parent Resource Area. Many of these programs are growing through linking with other services in the community that focus on child and family health and development.

At the CAPC Office, Pat Miladin, Administrative Coordinator, is planning a volunteer program to recruit new, energetic and talented volunteers to the CAPC



programs and also, the working committees that are responsible for future planning for CAPC.

Our Steering Committee is in the process of adopting a decision-making strategy that will help achieve project goals of making parenting easier for single parent and low income families, reducing child abuse, and involving community members and services/agencies in making their community safer and healthier. Establishing good process is crucial to ensure that decisions are made with each stakeholder having an equal voice. CAPC staff and volunteers will continue to facilitate this process.

For more information on the CAPC project, its seven programs, or to find out how you can volunteer, please contact Pat Miladin, at 560-7477, or visit our office, off the foodcourt in Eastgate Square.

### Ask a planner?

(This is a new feature in the newsletter where common questions, that Social Planners often respond to are answered.)

#### Question:

"Where can I find local statistical information about Hamilton-Wentworth. I needed it yesterday?"

#### Answer:

SPRC recognizes that many social services agency staff are faced with the task of gathering local statistics. These statistics may help your agency develop an understanding of the community and its growing need for services. Often individuals may come up against "brick walls" in what seems to be a never-ending paper chase.

SPRC Planners may be able to assist you with finding basic information, which may range from census data to information collected in recent Hamilton-Wentworth studies. Social Planners may then be able to suggest other sources, or contacts in the community, who may have access to the statistical information that you need.

SPRC has also published many reports over the past few years that may be of value in your quest for information including, "Tracking Community Trends in Hamilton-Wentworth". This publication is filled with valuable information ranging from population projections to information about child poverty.

SPRC has a number of other useful publications for sale (discounted to SPRC members or when your agency purchases a membership to the SPRC - membership does have its privileges). Watch for upcoming

publications including the updated "1995 Household Budgeting Guide". See enclosed publication list.

Please send your enquiries to Ask a Planner? Or for more immediate results, call 522-1148.

## Defining Community Service Priorities for 1995

Don Jaffray

The Social Planning and Research Council along with other sponsoring groups, has planned and will be carrying out a community consultation process in the Region. Our purpose is to gather information on human service priorities in a way which will be useful to members of the community and funders of services. The consultation process will seek out the views of community service providers, people who donate their time and money to local community services, people who use community services and other members of the public who have an interest in this issue.

The organizations with a particular interest in the results of this process are the other sponsors including: The Hamilton Community Foundation, the Regional Health and Social Services Departments and the United Way of Burlington/Hamilton-Wentworth. They will use the results of this work to better inform their decisions in future and focus their longer term interests in improving community well-being.

Through workshops, small group discussions, presentations, readings, written and spoken submissions we hope to gather the views of this community on important questions. What do people see as priorities for meeting needs through services? What changes in services are needed to make services better meet the most important needs of the community? Are we having enough impact on community needs by responding the way we now do or should we be using alternative methods and strategies? These are a few of the questions we hope to address.

A full report on this process and our findings will be available in April of this year. The next issue of this newsletter will contain a summary of that report for those of you who might not want to study the full document. But for anyone who would like more information about the priority setting consultation or would like to participate, I invite you to call the SPRC and let us know. We'll be happy to tell you more about the process and help you get involved.



**Mary Ann Seldon :  
Volunteer Extraordinaire**



**Mary Ann Seldon** is currently the **President** of the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton-Wentworth, and for that alone she deserves a lot of credit. But Mary Ann has been a hard working, dedicated and vital member of the SPRC for many years in varying capacities.

She first joined the Board of Directors in 1989 and from that point on demonstrated her tremendous energy and enthusiasm for addressing community issues. Over the past six years she has worked on a number of committees SPRC formed to tackle difficult issues. Mary Ann chaired the Social Housing Action Committee while it was a committee of the SPRC working on strategies for creating more affordable housing in the Region. She also led the Evaluation Task Force in its work to develop further the science of evaluating community services.

Her greatest contribution however may be in guiding the SPRC through a change in governance of the organization. Under her leadership the Board has carefully altered the way in which it provides direction to the organization, concentrating now much more on the broad policy issues we face as a community while minimizing the time spent dealing with routine administrative issues.

For your high-spirited efforts and skillful contribution over many years, we salute you and thank you,

**Volunteers at the SPRC!!**

**S**PRC staff would like to take this opportunity to thank the volunteers who make our organization strong. These individuals have dedicated countless hours of time, expertise, and energy in attending board meetings, developing a policy governance model for SPRC, facilitating during workshops, and drafting insightful reports.

Volunteer Appreciation Week events will be held during the week of April 23-29, 1995, to recognize their valuable contributions.

The SPRC derives about 80 per cent of its funding from the United Way. It also receives funding from the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth. Its role is to provide an independent voice supporting citizen participation in improving the quality of life for all community members. It does so by providing services that include social planning, community development and social research. Its board is comprised of volunteer members from a wide cross-section of the Hamilton-Wentworth community.

The SPRC has served the greater Hamilton-Wentworth community for more than 30 years. It is one of the longest-standing social planning agencies in Canada.

**Board of Directors:**

Sandy Bozak	Paul McWhinnie
Mary Buzzell	Wayne Marston
Marvin Caplan (Past President)	Matilde Nunez
Lorraine Chapman	Jody Orr (Advisor)
Narcyza Cieplik	Robert Ridge (Treasurer)
Marilyn Craven	Mary Ann Seldon
Marion Emo	(President)
Richard Francescutti	Sharon Smikle
William John	Alan Whittle
Peter Leibovitch	Dave Wilson
Brother Richard MacPhee	Charlotte Yates
George McLaughlin	Colleen Van Berkel
(Vice President)	

**Intercultural Committee:**

Between 1990 and 1993 the SPRC Multicultural Committee drafted policies for the Board based on previous research. Committee members then worked to define new Terms of Reference. The Intercultural



Committee is mandated to dialogue with diverse racial and cultural communities in Hamilton-Wentworth to identify trends which show and describe the impacts of economic disruption on certain groups. The SPRC Board will be informed of such findings and recommendations for action and policy will ensue.

Mary Buzzell	Ed Smee
Ana-Maria Figueredo	Sharon Smikle
Diana von Appen (resigned Fall 1994)	

#### **Resource Facilitation Team:**

The Resource Facilitation Team is a standing committee made up of no fewer than 15 people with skills in community development, action-oriented research and areas defined as priorities by the Board. It advises Board and staff on projects, social policy and advocacy issues. It also acts as a forum for information exchange among Committee members and other members of the community. It also works to encourage skill development in other community partners.

Marla Adams	Matilde Nunez
Carmen Bian	Shelley Rempel
Barrie Boatman	Sharon Smikle
Tom Edge	Anne Snider
Anne Louise Heron	Lee Staats
Bill Lee	Colleen Van Berkel
Evelyn Myrie	Jane Worrall

#### **Nominating Committee:**

The Nominating Committee is responsible for recommending a slate of nominees to the annual meeting in accordance with organizational bylaws. Members are appointed on a rotating basis.

Marvin Calpan	Marg Kowalski
Marion Emo	George McLaughlin
Doreen Johnson	



## **Promoting Community Economic Development:**

### **The Co-operatives Development Centre**

Dale Anderson

**T**he Co-operatives Development Centre began to take shape as renovations were completed and project staff hired in November. What began as a dream of

the Regional Chairman's Renaissance Committee on Economic Revitalization to have a "co-operatives incubation centre" in Hamilton-Wentworth, became a reality with the help of two financial grants and the commitment of the Social Planning and Research Council to oversee the project. Renovations to convert a classroom in the Rotary Club of Hamilton Self Help Centre into offices were possible through a grant from the Jobs Ontario Community Action Program. Funding for three project staff and their support was provided through Employment and Immigration Canada.

The broad goal of the Co-operatives Development Centre is to provide support services to groups and individuals interested in establishing co-operative enterprise and to promote this form of economic development in the community. Self assessment, feasibility, business planning, facilitating and co-operation within groups and among sectors, and help with financial planning and marketing, are some of the many ways the Centre assists new business creation and economic development in the region.

The Centre is currently developing relationships within the region's Cultural Industries, exploring ways that co-operatives may encourage economic growth in these sectors. Much of this activity is in conjunction with the provincial and regional initiatives to promote the establishment and growth of an artisan's village in the Barton St. area (between Wellington and Wentworth streets).

Promoting co-operatives in the Hamilton-Wentworth region is quite a challenge because this economic form is not as common here as in other parts of Canada. For many communities in these provinces, co-operatives are a well-developed and significant part of their local economies. Various types of co-operative are evident in these areas, including consumer co-operatives (such as grocery stores, day care, housing or financial services), producer co-operatives (such as dairy farmers, wheat pools, independent fishers, woodlot owners or craftspeople), and worker co-operatives, which is a co-operatively owned and operated business. The common principle for all types of co-operatives is that they are all owned and controlled by their members, who share equally in the responsibility and rewards of the co-operative. The Co-operatives Development Centre is responding to the lack of a co-operatives infrastructure in this region by developing information and consultation services for those desiring to establish a co-operative in their community. Since all co-operatives respond to the specific needs of people within a local community, they should be part of any program of community economic development. Co-



operatively owned businesses, for example, respond to the need many have for secure, meaningful and long-term employment opportunities. It also allows for growth toward potential within each member-employee of the co-operative business. The Co-operative Development Centre team stands together in their commitment to promoting this kind of personal economic well-being through co-operation and co-operative structures.



## Hamilton Wentworth Community Coalition on Social Security Reform

Paul Benvenuti

**T**he Coalition is a multi-faceted community group made up of 22 people, ranging from community service organization workers to the Consumers of these services.

On December 20, 1994 a temporary soup kitchen, Santa Chretien, with Elves Axworthy and Martin, made their "presents" known at Gore Park in downtown Hamilton. Santa Chretien gave out a range of gifts, from a "bag of debt" for a student to "tax loopholes" for big business. On this cold and gray day, H&R Block was offering the service of rental rebate cheques to Social Assistance recipients. The "Block" was charging 15 percent on the first \$300 of the cheque issued, to the Welfare recipient, as the cost of providing the service. In fact, on a previous day of that week, according to the Hamilton Spectator, over 4500 citizens were in line for hours in front of the Hamilton area H&R Block offices. All anxiously waiting for their rental rebate cheque.

The Coalition has made formal requests to have their voices heard. Over the past couple of months the Coalition has sent letters to Deputy Prime Minister Sheila Copps, asking her to bring the Standing Committee on Social Reform to the Hamilton-Wentworth Region. Or at least to hold a townhall style meeting in Hamilton. Her constituents from Hamilton East deserve to have their voices heard! Still, not a word from her or her office on arranging one of these public forums.

In the future the Coalition has plans to work on a number of projects. These projects will include issues that pertain to people with disabilities, affected by Social Reform, arranging an all candidates meeting during the Provincial Election, showing their support at a student

rally at McMaster against program cuts, and soon a meeting of local MPPs to discuss the upcoming provincial budget.



## Staff Update

Caroline Eyk

**S**PRC staff would like to congratulate two staff on their recent promotions. DON JAFFRAY, formerly a Social Planner, is now our new Executive Director as of December 1, 1994. SUSAN WEST, formerly CAPC Program Coordinator, is now our new Social Planner as of January 2, 1995. Way to go Don and Susan!!!

SPRC would like to welcome back GLORIA DESANTIS from her 7 month parental leave. Gloria returns to work on a part time basis on January 31, 1995. It is great to have you back!!!

SPRC would like to welcome six new staff who are working on a Section 25 grant re: Co-op development and Barton Street historical research. DALE ANDERSON, Resource Developer; JENNIFER FAKLI, Administrative Secretary and JOHN DALEY, who is continuing on as Co-op Developer, are working on the development of the Co-operatives Development Centre. PAUL BENVENUTI, Events Coordinator, is planning an event for the Landsdale Neighbourhood.

JULIE FITZGERALD, Researcher and RHONDA GARDINER, Research Assistant; are back working on historical research of the Barton Street Area.

SPRC also welcomes JUDY KLOOSTERMAN. Judy is working as Office Clerk for the Community Action Program for Children project. She is assisting the CAPC office over the next few months.

SPRC would also like to welcome back CAROLYN CADE and ROSEMARY JAWORKSY who have returned to our organization. Carolyn was on a placement last semester at the SPRC for her Masters degree in Social Work from Wilfrid Laurier University. Rosemary is working as a part-time Coordinator on updating our Guide for Household Budgeting until the end of March 1995. Rosemary was a Research Assistant at SPRC years ago.



## **The Nominating Committee of the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton-Wentworth**

is seeking nominations to the  
Board of Directors for terms of  
office ranging from one to three years.

This is a voluntary position, without remuneration and involves attendance at one or two meetings per month.

The Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton-Wentworth (SPRC) is a non-profit community-based agency which is committed to public participation in the development of social policy in Hamilton-Wentworth.

If you are interested in applying for a position with the Board of Directors, please send a letter to the Nominating Committee, c/o SPRC, 255 West Avenue North, Hamilton, Ontario L8L 5C8, which describes the reasons for your interest in the SPRC and the experiences/skills and perspectives that you could bring to the SPRC as a Board member.

Please note, all correspondence and meetings are in English. The SPRC welcomes the participation of all members of the community on its Board of Directors.

For more information pertaining to this opportunity, please contact Sally Quider at the SPRC office at 522-1148 ext. 308 / Fax 522-9124 before March 3, 1995.

### **Acknowledgements:**

#### **TDD Machine**

The SPRC would like to thank the Hamilton Community Foundation for their generous grant which made it possible for us to purchase our new TDD machine.  
The number is 522-0434, please feel free to use it anytime.



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Special thanks to Jennifer Fakli who assisted with the production of this issue.

We are looking for feedback on our newsletter from our readers.

Please call or fax with your comments.

Also, if you are interested in submitting an article for our newsletter  
please contact the editor.





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## workfare

### Lessons In History

by Susan West

#### What is Workfare?

"Workfare" simply; is a policy that makes it conditional for people to work in return for welfare. This may seem like a new, and attractive, idea dreamed up as part of the Common Sense Revolution. But the policy of workfare is nothing new.



#### Why Workfare?

Workfare is, and has been a particularly attractive policy in times when those who are working are finding it harder to make ends meet, and begrudge those who they feel are getting handouts courtesy of their tax dollars. But welfare isn't about money for nothing. Welfare was designed to help the needy in our communities, and ensure them their dignity by providing for the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. And although it was never intended as a program you had to work for, it has often been used during hard times.

The provincial government claims that workfare is an effective program that will match people on welfare with full time employment. The government also claims that it will save us money. I suggest we examine the record.

#### Is Workfare effective?

There are a number of provinces and states who have, in recent history, tried to use workfare to get people back into full-time employment, with little to no success.

One of the most recent experiments, and there have been several, took place in Quebec in 1990. Welfare recipients could earn the \$50 per month that had been cut from their cheques by taking a six month manual labour job through a program called EXTRA. Unfortunately, after the program, 97% of recipients returned to welfare. The program was further shown to be exploited for free labour as employers refused to hire the now trained worker, and opted to sign for another EXTRA worker instead.

Sweden has also dipped into workfare. It enjoyed some success but only when the unemployment rate was less than three percent. But as unemployment rose, job placements in the private sector became unavailable, making the program inoperative.

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### Will Workfare save us money?

Workfare is costly. Workfare involves large investment (capital and time) in training and providing supports for employment, such as child care and transportation. It also costs money to administer, train staff to place workers, and to train the workers themselves.

Workfare in Sweden was abandoned because of high costs. It found that it could not afford to train and subsidize public works jobs, once the private sector jobs, even the most menial, were no longer available. And the bottom line was that there were no overall cost savings, given the fiscal climate, to continue to operate workfare.

Similarly, in New Brunswick, where 3,000 people cut down trees and brush for a public utility company for workfare, costs ran as high as \$177 million dollars, (\$20,000 per person). And if workers survived the high accident rates associated with the project, workers were eligible for Unemployment Benefits.

The record shows that any cost savings that could be associated with people leaving welfare, through workfare, are generally cases of shifting costs from one budget line to another. Should the Ontario government truly want to be responsible in its social spending, consideration should be given to job creation programs, with heavy investment in training for future "new economy" jobs in technology and information.

For workfare to work, there has to be jobs. And, if dollars are going to be shifted as a result of workfare, they may as well be shifted into job creation and training programs.

It is with scepticism that workfare is awaited in Hamilton-Wentworth - a community that is known for championing rights for labourers. But from a strictly historical review, workfare hasn't worked in hard times. And in the context of our own reality - these are hard times. Workfare may be more popular with the Ontario electorate in the short-term but it will likely be costly, and ineffective. Taking a few lessons from history, may help this government avoid mistakes made in the past.

(Facts about current workfare projects were taken from Singing for our Supper: A Review of Workfare Programs, released by the Ontario Network of Employment Skills Training Projects).

## Can Workfare work in Hamilton-Wentworth?

Workfare has only shown minimal success when it:

- operates where there are jobs to match workers to;
- is voluntary, not mandatory;
- respects existing employment standards;
- is not used to replace paid workers;
- it matches the goals of each worker to needs of each employer;
- ensures that supports, such as training, transportation and child care are offered;
- is carefully monitored and evaluated

The SPRC is preparing a report on Workfare. If you would like to comment on Workfare, please write to Susan West at SPRC, 255 West Ave. N. Hamilton, ON, L8L 5C8.

### STAFF UPDATE

by Sally Quider

*Gina Dimitropoulis* has been working as a Planning Assistant to assist in a study on which the SPRC and the Region's Department of Social Services have agreed to cooperate. This study is investigating the reasons why so many welfare (GWA) claimants have not renewed their claims for benefits in the Hamilton-Wentworth Region.

*Mark Fraser* has been working as a Planning Assistant to do research for the Participation House Project which is exploring the needs, expectations and capacities among youth with physical disabilities. The SPRC has teamed up with Participation House to carry out this study to assess the needs, expectations and perceptions of disabled youth aged 16 to 24 in the Hamilton-Wentworth Region. Mark is also working on the Impact Analysis and Social Well-Being Project which consists of two separate initiatives to monitor the impacts of social spending cuts to the Hamilton-Wentworth Region. One looks at the perspectives of agencies and the services they provide while the other monitors the general sense of social well-being of the community as a whole.

*Tamara Harrod* works at the main reception desk of the Self Help Centre on a Co-Op Placement from Parkview Secondary School. Tamara started in February and will be with us until June.

*Caroline Neufeld*, Community Researcher and *Ronaldo Parada*, Community Development Worker have been hired through the Human Resource Development Section 25 program and have been working on the Self Help Centre/Self Help Network project.





## Warm a Heart

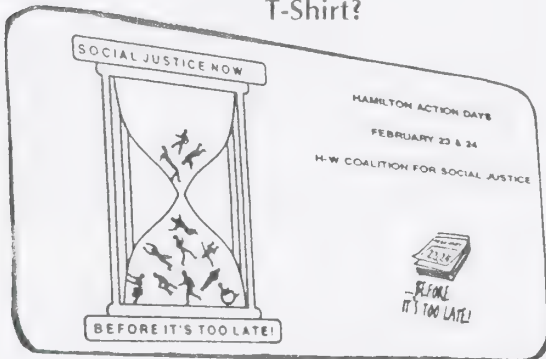
by Sharon Charters

During the month of November, the CAPC office, in conjunction with the Hamilton-Wentworth Police Department and the Neighbourhood Watch Program, collected donations of warm winter clothing for children ages newborn to seven. We were thrilled with the generosity shown by the citizens of Hamilton. Thousands of articles of winter clothing including snow suits, mittens, boots and sweaters, were received at collection bins located at each police station and the CAPC office. Distribution of the clothing took place at St. Gregory the Great Church on Centennial Parkway on December 1st. It was estimated that 400 families received assistance in clothing their children. Leftover clothing was given to St. Vincent de Paul for further distribution.

Many thanks to all who contributed clothing, to the volunteers, to all of the local businesses who contributed bags, to St. Gregory the Great Church for the use of their facilities, and to the local media including CHCH TV, the Hamilton Spectator and Rogers Cable 14.

.....

### Did You Forget to Buy Your *Official* Hamilton Days of Action T-Shirt?



Don't worry, you can still purchase this souvenir at the same low price of \$12.00 from the Hamilton-Wentworth Coalition for Social Justice!!!

Drop by 255 West Ave. N. to pick up your T-shirt, or to place a large order - call Suzanne Brown at 522-1148 or Andrea Horwath at 545-0442.

Support the Hamilton-Wentworth Coalition for Social Justice in the continuing fight against social inequity and injustice. Donations also accepted.

## Volunteer Spot Light:

### *Colleen Van Berkel*

Colleen has been a Board member for nearly two years and is Co-Chair of the Resource Facilitation Team. Colleen has served as a member of the Advisory Committee.

In addition to this, she has made and continues to make a valuable contribution to other projects of the organization including CAPC, Citizen Participation Project and our long term planning process.



*"Volunteering with the SPRC has provided me the opportunity to contribute to my community and to work with dynamic committed people towards social justice" said Colleen when asked to reflect on her involvement. Her support has been a tremendous asset to the organization and is valued and appreciated by those of us privileged to work with her.*



## COMMUNITY CONSULTATION ON HUMAN SERVICE PRIORITIES IN HAMILTON-WENTWORTH: An Overview and Initial Analysis

by Don Jaffray

About one year ago, many members of this community took part in workshops designed to identify local health and social service priorities. Since then many have wondered what has been learned as a result of the exercise and what measurable impact the process has had on local decision-making. Answers to some of those questions are now available. The SPRC committed from the beginning to conduct a review of the process and its' impact. The first in a short series of reports evaluating the consultation is now available.

The detailed report of findings is available as a publication of the SPRC, and community agencies and individuals are invited to examine the findings in their entirety. But for those who prefer to know only the most salient findings derived from the study, they are offered here. Those surveyed recommended that any future consultation on priorities do the following:

- ensure the sponsors have clearly stated objectives from the outset
- determine whether the consultation is to achieve general community input or very focused recommendations/strategies from the community
- keep discussion group sizes manageable and consider having "integrated" sessions
- choose background/discussion papers carefully
- ensure a non-threatening environment for participants and consider including them in the planning stage
- aim for fair community representation
- do not underestimate the time and energy commitment required for an effective consultation
- relay outcomes of the consultation to the participants and advocate for mutual accountability

These findings are drawn from key informant interviews carried out several months following the consultation events. As a result, most of the recommendations reflect on the process rather than the impact on decision-making. We hope to share the lessons learned and become increasingly effective at deciding and being guided by a commonly accepted set of human service priorities for our community.

The evaluation process continues. Two more short studies will be carried out at six month intervals. These will focus more on the question of gauging impacts which may be derived from the consultation process.

Evaluation results will continue to be available to community members here in Hamilton-Wentworth as well as to other communities across Ontario. This way we hope to share the lessons learned and become increasingly effective at deciding and being guided by a commonly accepted set of human service priorities for our community.

### CAPC

by Sharon Charters

The following is the second part of a seven part series highlighting the programs funded through the Community Action Program for Children.

### *Community Action Program for Children (CAPC)*

#### **Community Support Worker Program**

The Community Support Worker Program is administered by the Region of Hamilton-Wentworth, one of the five CAPC partner agencies. Service is provided to residents within the CAPC catchment area of East Hamilton/Stoney Creek.

This program is designed to support and assist single parents with children ages 0 to 6 years of age. The workers meet with parents in their home and focus on the development of life skills, child rearing skills and household management skills. The Community Support Worker enhances the families' ability to cope and assists the parent to develop an action plan to return to school or find employment. Community Support Workers also facilitate groups throughout the East End of Hamilton.

Ready, Set, Go is a group to assist parents and/or single adults to return to school or work. The group is co-facilitated by a Community Support Worker or Home Management Worker and Regional Employment Services. The group is held for 16 sessions on topics such as Budgeting Money, How to Find Child Care, Time Management, Problem-Solving, Decision Making, Connecting to the Community and Acting on your job or school career plan.

Further information on the Community Support Worker Program may be obtained by contacting Joanne Case at 546-3088.



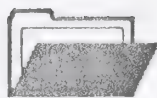
## Stemming the Tide of Social Program Reductions

By Don Jaffray

For some time now, we have been watching as all levels of government cut programs, benefits and services from the social security system in our community. The driving force has been a commonly held desire to reduce government deficits. Social programs have been characterized as too generous, inefficient or a frill we can no longer afford. But the plan for making these changes and the debate about it has been out of balance. Very little time and attention has been given recently to examining why these programs may be of benefit. We presume that at some point health and social programs are worth the cost. So we need to be clear about the extent to which social programs contribute to desirable conditions of well-being in our community, conditions that even deficit busters hope to preserve. In cutting programs and services, there will be subtle and not so subtle impacts that we haven't fully anticipated. We need to learn more about these impacts.

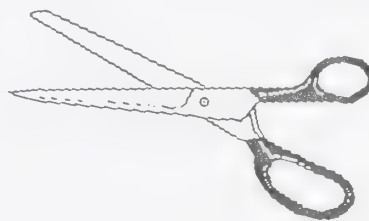
This year several government decisions, combined with those made in the later half of last year, have significantly reshaped services and our local economy. The impact of those choices has still not been fully felt. Still more cuts are planned. By now, even cost cutting enthusiasts are beginning to wonder if reducing social programs further as a way of saving money has reached the limit, or already gone too far.

Locally the SPRC is now working with a wide range of service providers and government representatives to create a system for monitoring the impact of cuts to services that we experience locally. The point of this ongoing exercise will be to build a body of evidence which demonstrates for community members the extent to which changes improve or undermine the capacity for health and well-being in our Region. Participants in this exercise are motivated by a keen interest in the results probably because they are aware that at some point reducing government deficits at the expense of our population's health may not be the best strategy for



cutting costs. But the case needs to be made: have the cuts to programs and services been worth the loss in quality of life, or would alternative choices have been more appropriate? More evidence is needed to answer the question.

Some of the indicators we may use to track the improvement or decline in our quality of life are: labour force participation rates, infant mortality rates, social assistance caseload rates, the number of children in care, affordable housing information, suicide rates and rates of sexual assault as a measure of safety in the community. These indicators are being considered but others may ultimately be selected. Selecting a few key indicators is complicated. In part, this is because we want indicators which most people in our community would agree are a good measure of our state of well-being. It is complicated for another reason. We hope to track the same set of indicators being used by major municipalities across Ontario and Canada.



Comparisons of health and well-being with other municipalities will tell us if we in Hamilton-Wentworth are doing better or worse than other cities in the country. They will also help us to better understand which government choices, federal, provincial or municipal, have most affected us.

Conditions are changing. This information will help us see how. The results will tell us whether or not we are finding new ways to do things better and cheaper, or just cheaper.



## THE REBIRTH OF O.S.S.W.A.

by Stephen Jeremie

The Ontario Social Service Worker Association (OSSWA) held a meeting on February 8th/96. The meeting was held to exchange information and to generate interest and support regarding current issues in a changing society, and also look at the future of Social Service Workers in the Province.

*The primary goal of O.S.S.W.A. is to bring awareness to all other agencies and services in the community and to remind others that Social Service Workers are a significant body, and a vital component, to our communities and the public. Our association is built on graduates and undergraduates of the Social Service Worker Program across the Province. The "new" S.S.W. provides a new concept of social work. With the growth of modern technology, today's social service worker is equipped with: computer skills, a generic approach to social work, a strong understanding of emotional support, policy and administrative practices, etc. It is expected that Social Service Workers will have a continuous positive impact on and in the community especially now during all these economic times of cutbacks and job layoffs!*

*The Purpose of the O.S.S.W.A.: The O.S.S.W.A. will be headed by a steering committee for the purpose to continue to build membership in the association and help members to be aware of any new developments.*

O.S.S.W.A. has been building a strong membership among the thousands of S.S.W. graduates and undergraduates throughout the province.

O.S.S.W.A. will have a quarterly newsletter with updates on O.S.S.W.A. membership and issues that are relevant to you.

Most importantly, knowledge that a strong and unified voice exists that will be able to represent the best interest of social service providers and consumers.

*Stephen Jeremie is a 2nd year Social Service Worker graduating in April/96 completing his Mohawk College field placement at the SPRC. He is an active member of the SPRC Intercultural Committee.*

## SELF HELP CENTRE NEEDS FURNITURE

The Self Help Centre is still looking for furniture donations especially chairs that could be used in the auditorium for large events. Please call Gloria DeSantis 522-1148 ext. 312.



(Graphic taken from Self-Help A "How To" Manual by the Self Help Connection, Canadian Mental Health Assoc. Nova Scotia Division June 1990.)

## WOULD YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW BE INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING AT THE SELF HELP CENTRE?

- Do you enjoy the outdoors?
  - Do you enjoy gardening?
  - Do you know how to run a lawn mower?
  - Do you have three hours each week to volunteer?

If you said yes to these four questions we have the ideal volunteer position for you. By June 1996 the City of Hamilton will complete renovations to create a beautiful new garden in the front area of the Self Help Centre - a wonderful heritage building also known as the West Avenue School.

Please call Gloria DeSantis at 522-1148 ext 312 if you or someone you know might be interested.



## IS THERE SOME LIGHT IN THIS DARKNESS?

By Gloria DeSantis

We are being confronted with more and more questions lately about how our community should/can handle yet more cuts to health and social programs and services. The provincial government continues to focus on its fiscal policies and responsibilities while it ignores its moral responsibilities. Is there some light in this darkness which seems to surround us?

Yes, there may be some light in this darkness depending on your strengths and your needs. I'm referring to the self help/mutual aid movement as a light of hope in our community for all those who can no longer find services which they require. At the same time, the provincial government should not be permitted to neglect its moral responsibility to care for its people in the expectation that self help will meet all people's needs.

Professionals as well as community people are turning to the self help/mutual aid movement more and more as a replacement to the "care" once offered through a variety of organizations. Self help is also being seen as a complement to costly professional care since organizations are downsizing. Self help is not a new concept though it has been around for many years and has had a powerful impact on many people in need.

*Self help can be defined as:*

"voluntary, small group structures for mutual aid and the accomplishment of a special purpose. They are usually formed by peers who have come together for mutual assistance in satisfying a common need, overcoming a common handicap or life-disrupting problem, and bringing about desired social and/or personal change. The initiators and members of such groups perceive that their needs are not, or cannot be, met by or through existing social institutions. Self help groups emphasize face-to-face social interactions and the assumption of personal responsibility by members" (Katz & Hermalin, 1987).

The literature on self help groups shows that these groups can serve a variety of functions: emotional support; the provision of role models, a powerful ideology; relevant information; ideas about ways of coping; the opportunity to help others; social companionship; and a sense of mastery and control over one's life circumstances (Orford, 1993, p. 225).

Some groups prefer the term mutual aid as it better reflects the reciprocal nature of peer helping. Quite clearly, the old cliché "helping you helps me" holds true here. Some reports distinguish these groups from "support groups" which are professionally led (Town, 1993, p.2).

The Self Help Centre in the north end of Hamilton has become a meeting place for many self help groups in the Hamilton-Wentworth Region during the past two years. A number of self help groups have also expanded due to demand for mutual aid and so these groups have opened offices in the Self Help Centre.

The Centre offers large and small meeting rooms for groups, access to technology (e.g., FAX machine, voicemail, etc.) for self help groups, to name but a few services. Soon the Self Help Network Board of Directors will assume management responsibility for the Centre and begin offering services like fundraising workshops, problem-solving seminars, and other skills development events.



Self help groups at the Centre deal with a variety of topics including incest, depression and manic-depression, poverty, visible and invisible disabilities, anti-racism, unemployment, and chronic fatigue syndrome.

Self help may not be for everybody though. Some individuals and families require the assistance of a professional. And self help may not necessarily put food on the table for a family living in poverty. Depending on one's circumstances, people in need may move along a continuum from professional/expert "care" to peer supported mutual aid.

(Cont'd on Pg 8)



## IS THERE SOME LIGHT IN THIS DARKNESS? (Cont'd from Pg 7)

But how will these small informal groups continue to operate if their membership increases 10-fold because certain organizations which used to help them no longer exist? How will self help groups meet the needs of a larger-than-ever membership? Will they be forced to raise money to be able to pay for the seminars, information, etc. which their diverse group of members may need? What might happen when they can no longer hold weekly or monthly meetings at someone's home because the group has become too large? Where might they go? How can they afford to keep each other informed about upcoming events, etc.? The Self Help Centre may be able to help.



Self help/mutual aid can provide a unique opportunity for helping community people with shared needs during this dark period in our province. And we know that the energy and motivation of community people will persevere. Our community will not end up in total darkness!

References: Katz & Hermalin (1987). *Self Help and Prevention*. J. Hermalin and J.M. Morell (Eds) *Prevention Planning in Mental Health*; Newbury Park, CA. Sage.

Orford, J. (1993). *Self Help and Non-Professional Help. Community Psychology: Theory and Practice*. England.

John Wiley and Sons Limited: Town, C. (1993). *Toward Effective Self Help: A Group Facilitation Training Manual*. Produced for the Prevention Network of Hamilton-Wentworth, Hamilton, Ontario.

**For more information about how to book space for your self help group, how to receive a membership and what it offers etc., please call Gloria DeSantis at 522-1148 ext. 312.**

## HAMILTON DAYS OF ACTION: An Alternative Approach to the Social Policy Process

by Suzanne Brown

The democratic process has become a topic of popular attention in Ontario since the change in provincial government in June of 1995. The media has begun to speculate about the nature and definition of democracy, and public protests and demonstrations have occurred around its perceived demise at the provincial decision-making level. The debate around the definition of democracy raises the fundamental issue of responsibility for and control over policy formation and implementation.

Traditionally, democracy has been perceived as a mechanism whereby all members of society are given equal voice in determining the direction of social policy through the franchise which enables citizens to elect officials who will represent them in the decision-making process. The candidates which endorse the interests of the majority of citizens are elected and given the authority to develop policy reflective of these interests. In this traditional definition, the wishes of the people are realized through the democratic process of the franchise, and control and power over the policies which shape society are equally distributed to all citizens.

The foundation of the democratic system is the promotion of societal stability and cohesiveness based on the belief that all citizens have an equal opportunity to influence government policy. Conflict within this system, especially openly hostile opposition to the policies being implemented by a democratically elected government, is perceived to be negative because it disrupts the fair nature and stability inherent in the democratic system.

The protests and demonstrations which occurred across the province of Ontario in the past seven months culminated in the Hamilton Days of Action on February 23rd and 24th; in an historical display of peaceful solidarity, the people of Ontario came together in an attempt to alter the direction of social policy formation at the provincial level. Presently, the social safety net, health care, education, and labour legislation are being unravelled and destroyed at a rate that has left citizens, social activists and policy analysts reeling.

(Cont'd on Pg 9)



**HAMILTON DAYS OF ACTION: An Alternative Approach  
to the Social Policy Process**  
(Cont'd from Pg 8)

The sheer magnitude of policy changes that have occurred over the past eight months has not allowed for comprehensive analysis of impact; however the direction of this new policy leaves little doubt that the interests of the powerholders in society, latent during the middle decades of the 20th century, began to manifest and grow during the 1980's and by the 1990's had developed into full blown warfare against the powerless.

The scenario we see unfolding today can be analyzed by the conflict theory developed by sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf in 1965. In this analysis, the growing conflict between the provincial government in Ontario and many citizens of Ontario over social policy formation, as reflected by the escalating protest movement, is a consequence of the decisions of a small group of elite policy-makers at the provincial level to centralize power and wealth by removing power and wealth from vulnerable citizens. The resulting conflict serves a positive function in this situation; to resolve the problems which caused the conflict and to promote a fairer and more equitable democratic society.

In a democratic society, citizens should be able to participate in the decision-making processes which effect their lives. Social action should be understood as a legitimate means of democratic involvement in policy decisions when governmental decision-makers deliberately thwart the basic needs of certain citizens in society. David Gil (1992) legitimizes alternative approaches to policy process on this basis. There would be little reason to explore alternative approaches to development and promotion of social policies if the existing system would result in a social and economic order in which all members of society would lead meaningful, satisfying, and self-fulfilling lives" (p.111).

When citizens are being deprived of leading fulfilling lives, they have no choice but to take an alternative route to the policy process that is outside the traditional process of the powerholders.

Because powerless and marginalized people have traditionally been excluded from the decision-making process, the "protest tactics which defied political norms were not simply the recourse of trouble-makers and fools. For the poor, they were the only recourse" (Piven & Cloward, 1979, p.3). Public demonstrations in Ontario have become the strategy for poor and powerless citizens for lobbying government policy-makers. Political lobbying by corporations is sanctioned in the democratic system, therefore it is only fair to accept the political lobbying efforts of citizens without financial resources as an equally legitimate method of influencing the policy-making process. The protest movement is growing and gaining momentum across the province. As more and more citizens begin to feel the impacts of the changes to provincial policy and join this movement, there is little doubt that citizens will regain the access to the policy process that they are presently being denied.

References: David Gil (1992). *Unravelling Social Policy*. Rochester: Schenkman Books Inc.

Francis Fox Piven & Richard Cloward (1979). *Poor People's Movements: Why they succeed, how they fail*. New York: Vintage Books.

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*Editor: Sally Quider*

We are looking for feedback on our newsletter  
from our readers - What did you think?  
Please call or fax your comments. If you are  
interested in submitting an article for our  
newsletter, please contact the editor.



FRIENDS AND MEMBERS OF THE SPRC  
PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDARS  
FOR OUR 35th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, June 5th  
1 pm

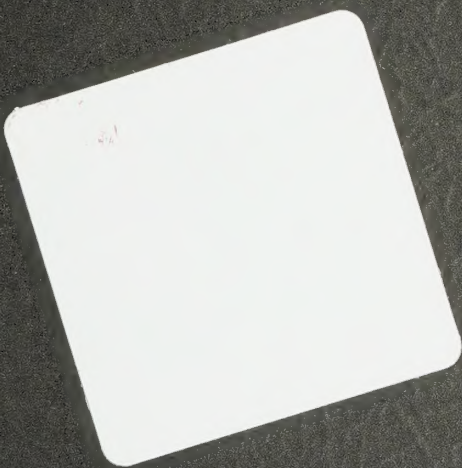
At the Rotary Club of Hamilton Self Help Centre  
255 West Avenue North, Hamilton

We are pleased to have as our guest speaker:

David Ross,  
Executive Director  
of the  
Canadian Council on Social Development

Mr. Ross has been speaking on Defending Social Development  
in Trying Times at events across Canada in honour of the  
75th Anniversary of the CCSD





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